

## **APPENDIX F ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

### **A. FEDERAL**

#### **A.1 Economic Development Administration**

The U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration offers two programs for assistance with economic development that apply to the Town of Sherman. One is the Public Works and Economic Development Facilities Assistance Program, which supports the construction or rehabilitation of essential public infrastructure and development facilities necessary to generate private sector jobs and investment, including investments that support technology-led development, redevelopment of brownfield sites, and eco-industrial development. Secondly, the Economic Adjustment Assistance Program is available to: (1) address the immediate needs of businesses and communities presently undergoing transition due to a sudden and severe job loss; and (2) demonstrate new and proactive approaches for economic competitiveness and innovative capacity for threatened regions and communities.

#### **A.2 USDA Wisconsin Rural Development**

Several loan and grant programs of benefit to the county and local business development are available from the USDA Rural Development. One of those programs is the Community Facility Guaranteed Loans Program, which provides funding to local units of government to construct, enlarge, extend, or otherwise improve community facilities providing essential services in rural areas and towns.

The Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants Program helps develop projects that will result in a sustainable increase in economic productivity, job creation, and incomes in rural areas. Projects may include business start-ups and expansion, community development, incubator projects, medical and training projects, and feasibility studies.

The purpose of the Business and Industry Direct Loan Program is to improve, develop, or finance business, industry, and employment and improve the economic and environmental climate in rural communities. Loan purposes include purchase and expansion of land, equipment, buildings, and working capital. Loans to public bodies can be used to finance community facilities and construct and equip industrial plants for lease to private businesses.

The Community Facilities Direct Loans and Grants Program provides funding for essential community facilities (CF) such as municipal buildings, day care centers, and health and safety facilities. Examples include fire halls, fire trucks, clinics, nursing homes, and hospitals. CF loans and grants may also be used for such things as activity centers for the handicapped, schools, libraries, and other community buildings.

### **B. STATE**

#### **B.1 Wisconsin Department of Commerce**

At least three programs are available to local units of government through the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. The first program is the Community Development Block Grant for Economic Development (CDBG-ED). Its purpose is to provide resources to local governments that will enable them to assist economic development projects in their community. The local unit of government is the applicant and recipient of the funds. A specific business, which must be located in a municipality of 50,000 or less, is loaned the funds for eligible business development uses. When the funds are repaid to the local government, they may stay in the community to be used as a revolving loan fund to assist other businesses in the community.

The second program is the Community Development Block Grant Public Facilities for Economic Development (CDBG-PFED). Its purpose is to provide grant funds to local governments that will enable them to provide needed public facilities (i.e., streets, sewer mains, water mains, etc.) to private business enterprises that are going to create full-time jobs by starting or expanding their businesses because of the availability of the funded public facilities.

The third program available from the Wisconsin Department of Commerce is the Community-Based Economic Development Program (CBED). Its purpose is to provide financing assistance to local governments and community-based organizations that undertake planning or development projects or that provide technical assistance in support of business (including technology-based businesses) and community development.

**B.2 Wisconsin Departments of Tourism and Commerce**

The Tourism Development Initiative is a multi-faceted program designed to assist tourism businesses that have been severely affected by consecutive winters with minimal snowfall. The program offers planning and training grants that focus on tourism development and diversification at the business and municipal levels. A Snow Emergency Loan is available to qualifying small businesses that can document significant revenue loss caused by the lack of snow.

**B.3 Wisconsin Department of Transportation**

Available from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is a program called the Transportation Facilities Economic Assistance and Development Program (TEA). The intent of the TEA program is to help support new business development in Wisconsin by funding transportation improvements that are needed to secure jobs in the state. A governing body, a business, a consortium group, or any combination thereof can apply for TEA program funding.

**B.4 Redevelopment of Contaminated Sites**

Redevelopment of contaminated or blighted locations can be of significant benefit to local units of government. Benefits range from removing potentially environmentally hazardous materials to adding tax base and jobs to the area. Too often, these sites are overlooked due to the perceived costs associated with redevelopment. Programs at the state and federal level can contribute to the cleanup of contaminated or blighted sites. The Petroleum Environmental Cleanup Fund Act (PECFA) and the creation of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts can be used to redevelop and clean up contaminated and blighted sites.

## **C. REGIONAL**

### **C.1 Northwest Regional Planning Commission**

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission is a cooperative venture of the local units of governments in the ten counties of Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, and Washburn and the five tribal nations of Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, Red Cliff, St. Croix, and Lac du Flambeau in the region. The purpose of NWRPC is to assist the communities of the membership to promote sustainable economic development, develop public facilities, provide planning and technical services, efficiently manage and conserve natural resources, and protect the environment. Every five years, NWRPC, with the cooperation of the local units of government in its region, prepares a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the entire Northwest Region.

In an effort to build a focused development strategy for the Northwest Region, NWRPC developed three non-profit development corporations, each focusing on a specific area need and opportunity including financing for business start up and expansions (Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation), technology-based business development (Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation), and affordable housing (Northwest Affordable Housing, Inc.).

### **C.2 Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation**

A strategic partner of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, the Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation, has available revolving loan funds to address a gap in private capital markets for long-term, fixed rate, low down-payment, and low interest financing to assist businesses in job creation/retention and growth.

### **C.3 SuperiorLife Technology Zone Program**

The Technology Zone program was developed out of the Build Wisconsin initiative, which is firmly based in the concepts of promoting regional cooperation and developing a technology base. Iron County is part of the SuperiorLife Technology Zone and won designation as such by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce (WDOC) in 2002. Each designated zone will get \$5 million in income tax incentives for high-tech development. The (WDOC) will certify eligible businesses for tax credits based on their ability to create high-wage jobs and investment and support the development of high-tech industries in the region. The SuperiorLife Technology Zone offers the potential for growth in the computer software, medical, and forestry clusters, among others.

## **D. LOCAL AND COUNTY**

Several economic development organizations dedicated to community and business development exist in Iron County and the Town of Sherman. Following is a list of these organizations that promote economic development or provide assistance to local units of government and businesses and industries within the county.

### **D.1 Iron County Development Zone Council**

The Iron County Development Zone Council (ICDZC) is a public/private non-profit organization that promotes economic and community development in Iron County. Formed in 1989, it has

three objectives: 1) to coordinate economic development efforts within Iron County; 2) to provide answers to requests and inquiries by businesses interested in investing and creating jobs in the county; and 3) to facilitate the application process for the state's tax credits. The ICDZC also administers the County's Revolving Loan Fund, which is available to new and expanding businesses. Additionally, the ICDZC has been a very strong partner for tourism development in the county.

According to the UW Extension, Community for Economic Development, a total of over one million dollars in tax credits have been made available to businesses locating or expanding in Iron County. These tax credits have assisted in the creation of 300 new jobs and \$13 million in new private investment in the county since the Iron County Development Zone Council was created.

Funding for the ICDZC comes from contributions from local units of government and private industry. In addition, it has been the recipient of grant money for planning projects.

#### **D.2 Iron County Resource Development Association, Inc.**

The Iron County Resource Development Association, Inc. (ICRDA) is a private not for profit corporation that promotes development in Iron County, mainly in the Hurley Industrial Park. Formed in 1963, the ICRDA acquired the Hurley Industrial Park and made an investment for the expansion of the park to accommodate industries. The ICRDA has worked with the City of Hurley in obtaining grants for infrastructure improvements in the industrial park.

ICRDA has provided "seed money" for five community development projects in Iron County. Loans or loan guarantees have been made to nine businesses in three communities for start-up or expansion since 1990.

#### **D.3 Iron County Economic Development Committee**

The Iron County Economic Development Committee's main focus is to develop an industrial base in Iron County, which will bring higher wage jobs to the area. At the same time, the committee tries to expand the growing tourism industry in Iron County. It is composed of Iron County Board members.

#### **D.4 SuperiorLife Technology Zone Program**

In June 2002, Iron County was one of six counties in Northwest Wisconsin designated as a Technology Zone (called SuperiorLife) by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. Developed out of the Build Wisconsin initiative, the Technology Zone program brings \$5 million in income tax incentives for high-tech development in the area. The Technology Zone program will help the county generate high-wage jobs through the startup and expansion of technology-based businesses. Eligible businesses will be certified by the Department of Commerce for tax credits based on their ability to create high-wage jobs and investment and support the development of high-tech industries in the region.

#### **D.5 Iron County Development Zone Program**

Iron County was designated as a Wisconsin Development Zone and includes the Cities of Hurley and Montreal and the Towns of Saxon, Kimball, Carey, Oma, Gurney, Anderson, Knight, Pence,

and Mercer. As a Development Zone, special state incentives are available to qualifying businesses that locate or expand within the zone.

The Community Development Zone program is a tax benefit initiative designed to encourage private investment and to improve both the quality and quantity of employment opportunities. It offers non-refundable tax credits for new, full-time jobs created by a business. Furthermore, it offers a non-refundable environment remediation credit for all eligible environmental remediation costs.

Unfortunately, the Town of Sherman is not a current member of this effort.

#### **D.6 Business Development Assistance**

There are several options available for small businesses in the Town of Sherman seeking technical assistance. One is the Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation (WBIC), a partner organization formed by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC). Although its office is located in Washburn County, its service area is the entire ten-county region. Since its beginning in 1996, WBIC has developed a unique array of technical, financial, and business support services for start up and expanding businesses. This work involves analyzing a firm's financial needs including preparation or review of financial projections, analyzing requirements and procedures of the various financing programs, identifying the appropriate funding sources, structuring sources and uses of funds, and the preparation of forms and documents needed in applications.

Another source for technical assistance is the University of Wisconsin-Superior Small Business Development Center (SBDC). It assists entrepreneurs, small business owners, and managers who are in the pre-venture, start-up, or existing business stage. SBDC offer confidential, one-to-one counseling on business management topics through personal visits, email, and telephone. The center maintains a business-to-business network so a new business can ask for business expertise from a pertinent resource.

Technical assistance for small businesses is also available through the SCORE Association (Service Corps of Retired Executives), which is a resource partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration. There is a chapter in Douglas County that offers help with any business questions, strategy, and concerns. Small business counseling is available via telephone, email, workshops, and activities.

#### **D.7 Access to Financing and Venture Capital**

Small businesses create the lion's share of new jobs, but are the least able to obtain reasonable financing for job-creating expansions and start-ups. Because of the shortage of long-term financing, small businesses are frequently unable to match the term of financing with the life of the asset.

The Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation (NWBDC) is a non-profit corporation formed by NWRPC to address the critical need for business financing in northwest

Wisconsin. It is targeted at the best economic development opportunities of the area: the timber and wood products industry, tourism, and other manufacturing and service industries.

NWBDC manages three revolving loan funds (RLFs) and a technology seed fund. The overall goal of the RLFs is to stimulate private sector investment in long-term business assets and to create new jobs. The funds partially fill the gap in private capital markets for long-term fixed rate financing. The technology seed fund can be used to complete research and development activities and validate the technology, develop prototypes, and file patents and copyrights.

In addition to the NWBDC loan funds, Iron County has a local revolving loan fund. The Iron County RLF was established in 1991 from Economic Development Grant funds awarded by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce to assist local entrepreneurs with their business ventures.

In late 2000, a community-based venture capital (equity) fund called the Wisconsin Rural Enterprise Fund, LLC (WREF) was established by the Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation. It was formed to create a capital fund that would provide self-sustaining, moderate growth through financial investments made in rural businesses that meet the WREF criteria. Technology intensive businesses, which have the potential to create high-skilled, high-wage jobs in rural areas, are the targeted businesses. Currently, it is the only Northwest Wisconsin community-based venture capital fund; and its members include, besides WBIC, rural electric cooperatives and local community development organizations.

## **E. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

### **E.1 WoodLinks-USA**

Is a program designed to respond to the serious lack of skilled workers in the wood industry. It is an industry education partnership designed to enhance the wood product industry competitiveness and economic development through significant improvement of entry-level work force skills through high school curriculum. The program combines traditional classroom training with experienced based learning both in schools and in cooperating industry partners. The program is being proposed to all high schools in the area, including those in Iron County.

### **E.2 Gogebic Community College (GCC)**

Located in neighboring Ironwood, Michigan, GCC offers two-year associate degrees in pre-professional transfer programs as well as technical career programs. The college offers one of only two Ski Area Management programs in the nation and has a full-service ski hill right on campus.

### **E.3 Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC)**

WITC is an accredited postsecondary educational institution serving northwestern Wisconsin. Although neither a campus nor a branch is located in Iron County, there is a campus in neighboring Ashland County, which is within an easy commute. WITC offers customized training and technical assistance to business and industry to help them become more competitive, increase productivity, and to retain workers. This customized training is available at the business site or in a campus classroom setting.

**E.4 Northcentral Technical College (NTC)**

NTC has a regional campus in Phillips, Price County. NTC offers credit courses in several associate degree and diploma programs through self-paced "Flex Labs," interactive television, and conventional classroom settings. All campuses offer counseling and career development services, as well as a wide variety of continuing education and vocational classes.

**E.5 Nicolet Technical College**

Nicolet Technical College serves the towns of Sherman and Mercer. Nicolet main campus is in Rhineland, with classes held in Minocqua/Woodruff as well.

**E.6 Northland College,**

Northland College is located in the City of Ashland in neighboring Ashland County. It is a four-year baccalaureate degree college that is internationally known for its outstanding environmental degree programs.

**E.7 The Northwest Wisconsin Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (NWCEP)**

NWCEP is a non-profit corporation whose mission is to strengthen the economy by providing effective and efficient workforce development services to businesses and workers. In existence since 1968, it administers programs to help local youth and adults gain marketable skills and find better jobs. In addition, NWCEP provides a variety of services, including workshops, conferences, and newsletters for businesses and business development. NWCEP has its main office in neighboring Ashland County. In addition, there is a satellite office located in Park Falls in neighboring Price County.

**OTHER PROGRAMS**

There are many more federal, state, and local programs offering assistance to businesses. They are listed in the Economic Development Manual prepared by the Wisconsin Bankers Association and the Wisconsin Financing Alternatives booklet prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce.